

Abstract of the Invention

A real-time computer chat or discussion system includes a

5 social accounting system that persistently maintains summary information regarding user participation in the chat system and displays the information at user computers as a social accounting pane. In one implementation, the social accounting pane is rendered simultaneously adjacent a discussion message pane in which discussion messages are rendered. The social

10 accounting pane displays identifying information about each member of a discussion such as, for example, a user name and an email address. Members currently involved in or logged into the discussion are indicated with an attendance field. An entered field and an exit field indicate when each member last entered the discussion and, if not present, when the

15 member last exited the discussion. The social accounting pane may also list a session field indicating the number of sessions or times each member has entered the discussion. Thread, question, answer and comment fields may indicate the numbers of thread, question, answer and comment messages the member has posted.